

MEDIUM ÆVUM

Edited by C. T. Onions

VOLUME XIX

Published for the Society for the
Study of Mediæval Languages and Literature
by Basil Blackwell, Broad Street, Oxford

1950

Ug 716/51/89

X 207-M

⑦

DANTE AND A BYZANTINE TREATISE ON VIRTUES AND VICES

IN the Byzantine treatise *De Virtutibus et Passionibus*, which has come down to us in a number of manuscripts, there can be found an answer to some important problems of Dante's *Divina Commedia*. In this paper we shall limit ourselves solely to those problems connected with the *Inferno*. This treatise has been attributed to Euphraem the Great,¹ to St John Damascene,² and others, but it is impossible at present to determine its author or its date with any degree of certainty. However, Codex Palatinus Graecus 91 (ff. 145-150, 173-177) of the Vatican Library, which is of the twelfth century, shows that it is in any case older than Dante.

The treatise is a summary of the virtues and vices of the soul and the body, followed by an exposition of the nature of the human soul and the categories of sin, meant to help the reader to understand the great problem of virtue and vice. Its compiler has drawn directly and indirectly on a number of ancient and Christian authors—Plato,³ Aristotle,⁴ the Stoics,⁵ Gregory of Nyssa,⁶ St Mark the Hermit,⁷ St Nilus,⁸ Antiochus the Monk,⁹ and others—but he has misunderstood or intentionally distorted some of their teachings in order to fit them all into his system.¹⁰

At first, the author gives a 'full' catalogue of the virtues of the soul and those of the body, and then he proceeds to enumerate their vices. According to him, (A) the vices of the soul are¹¹: ἀσέβεια (impiety), κακοδοξία (heretical opinion)—that is to say, πᾶσα αἵρεσις—βλασφημία (blasphemy), θυμός (anger), ὀργή (wrath), πικρία (bitterness), ὀξύχολία (quickness to anger), μισανθρωπία (hatred of mankind), μνησικακία (remembrance of wrongs), καταλαλιά (slander), κατάκρισις (condemnation), λύπη ἄλογος (unreasonable sorrow), φόβος (fear), δειλία (cowardice), ἔρις (strife), ζήλος (fervour, zeal), φθόνος (envy), κενοδοξία (vain-

¹ Assemani, *S. Ephraem Syri Opera* (Romae 1746) III 425 f.

² Migne *Patr. Gr.* 95. 86.

³ p. 428c f. of the *Assemani* edition where the Platonic threefold division of the soul is introduced, and p. 428b where an allusion is made to Phaedrus (246A ff.). When quoting the *De Virtutibus et Passionibus* I shall always give the page number of the *Assemani* edition.

⁴ e.g. p. 425b the five senses of the body, etc.

⁵ e.g. p. 427A φιληδονία, φιλοδοξία, φιλαργυρία. Cf. *Epictetus* *Gnom.* 45.

⁶ p. 428D, on the nature of the soul; cf. Migne *Patr. Gr.* 45. 222 f.

⁷ Cf. p. 427b with Migne *Patr. Gr.* 65. 1045c.

⁸ Cf. p. 429b with Migne *Patr. Gr.* 79. 1436 f. περὶ τῶν ὀκτὼ τῆς κακίας λογισμῶν; p. 1468 about the διακρίσεις, etc.

⁹ Cf. p. 429f with Migne *Patr. Gr.* 89. 1677b.

¹⁰ e.g. p. 426b where λήθη (forgetfulness), βαθυμία (laziness), and ἀγνοία (ignorance) are given as the main sources of the vices of the soul, while in p. 426D φιλαργυρία (avarice), κακοήθεια (malignity), and πονηρία (wickedness) are mentioned as the root of all the evils, and in p. 432c φιλαργυρία (avarice) alone is given as their main cause. The author in p. 432c f. tells us that he tried to compile a full, short, and clear survey of *all* sins and virtues 'so that if possible no form of virtue or vice can be ignored' (ὥς μηδεμίαν εἰ δυνατόν ἰδέαν ἀρετῆς ἢ κακίας ἀγνοεῖσθαι).

¹¹ p. 426c f.

glory), *υπερηφάνεια* (pride), *υπόκρισις* (deceit), *ψεῦδος* (lie), *ἀπιστία* (faithlessness), *ἀφροσύνη* (folly, thoughtlessness), *ἀδιακρισία* (slyness, fraud), *σκιυφότης* (parsimony), *ἀπληστία* (insatiate desire), *φιλοῦγεία* (?) (love of health), *προσπάθεια* (passionate attachment), *σχῆσις γῆινων* (acquisition of worldly things), *ἀκηδία* (neglect, disregard), *μικροψυχία* (meanness of spirit), *ἀχαριστία* (ingratitude), *γογγυσμός* (grumbling), *τῦφος* (vanity), *οὔρις* (self-conceit), *σοβαρότης* (haughtiness), *ἀλαζονία* (false pretension), *φιλαρχία* (lust for power), *ἀνθρωπαρέσκεια* (desire to be a man-pleaser), *δολιότης* (deceitfulness), *ἀναίδεια* (shamelessness), *ἀναισθησία* (insensibility), *κολακεία* (flattery), *ὑπουλότης* (treachery), *εἰρωνεία* (dissimulation), *διψυχία* (duplicity).

And (B) those of the body are: *γαστριμαργία* (gluttony), *λαυμαργία* (gourmandism), *τρυφή* (luxuriousness), *μέθη* (drunkenness), *λαβροφραγία* (eating secretly), *φιληδονία ποικίλαι* (various types of lust), *πορνεία* (prostitution), *μοιχεία* (adultery), *ἀσέλγεια* (promiscuity), *ἀκαθαρσία* (depravity), *αἰμομιξία* (incest), *παιδοφθορία* (love of boys), *κτηνοβασία* (bestiality), *αἱ ἐπιθυμίαι κακαὶ καὶ πάντα τὰ παρὰ φύσιν καὶ αἰσχρὰ πάθη* (evil desires, and all the unnatural and obscene vices), *κλεψία* (theft), *ἱεροσυλία* (sacrilege), *ληστεία* (robbery), *φόνος ἐκ φθόνου ἢ ἀλόγου θυμοῦ* (murder caused by envy or unreasonable anger), *ἡ πᾶσα σωματικὴ ἀνάπαυσις καὶ ἀπόλαυσις τῶν θελημάτων τῆς σαρκὸς ὑγιαίνοντος μᾶλλον τοῦ σώματος* (any recreation of the body, and enjoyment of the desires of the flesh, when the body is in good health), *μαγίαι* (magic), *μαντεῖαι* (divinations), *γοητεῖαι* (charms), *δωινισμοί* (omens), *κληδονισμοί* (signs), *φιλοκοσμῖαι* (love of ornaments), *περπερίαι* (lasciviousness), *βλακεία* (slackness), *καλλωπισμοί* (embellishments), *ἐπιτρίμματα προσώπων* (painting of the face), *ἡ κατὰκριτος ἀσέλγεια* (condemned licentiousness), *κυβεία* (dice-playing), *ἡ ἐμπαθὴς τῶν τοῦ κόσμου ἡδῶν κατάχρησις* (passionate excessive use of worldly pleasures), *ἡ φιλοσώματος ζωὴ* (life cherishing the body).

After this enumeration of the sins of the soul and the body, the author adds: *ρίζαι δὲ πάντων τῶν κακῶν, καὶ ὡς ἂν εἴη τις πρωταίτιαι, φιληδονία, φιλοδοξία, καὶ φιλαργυρία*. (The root of all evils and one might say the primary evils, from which all others spring, are lust, ambition, and avarice.) It is not clear in the treatise whether these three primary vices, which can be traced back to the ancient world, and are found in the 'Gnomes of Epictetus' (no. 45), *οὐδὲν μικρότερον φιληδονίας καὶ φιλοκερδίας καὶ ἀλαζονείας* (nothing is viler than lust, avarice, and arrogance), are seen as the primary vices in general of soul and body, or of those of the body alone.¹

However that may be, the primary importance given here to the vices of lust, pride, and avarice immediately recalls the famous scene of the

¹ In the *Epistola Canonica* of Gregory of Nyssa (*Migne Patr. Gr.* 45. 224D), which our treatise uses as one of its main sources, these three vices are given as vices only of the *ἐπιθυμητικὸν* part of the soul. *Τοῦ δὲ ἐπιθυμητικοῦ μέρους . . . παρατροπὴ καὶ ἁμαρτία . . . ὅταν τις μεταγάγῃ τὴν ἐπιθυμίαν πρὸς τὴν ἀνυπόστατον κενοδοξίαν, ἢ πρὸς τὸ ἐπικεχωρισμένον τοῖς σώμασιν ἄνθος, ὅθεν γίνεται ἡ φιλοχρηματία καὶ ἡ φιλοδοξία καὶ ἡ φιληδονία*.

first canto of Dante's *Inferno*, where Dante in the Wood of Error meets the three symbolic beasts, the panther, the lion, and the wolf, which represent—as all his commentators agree—the vices of lust, pride, and avarice.

Then the author of our treatise (after giving the ideas of 'the most sage of the ascetes' Marcus on sin, as well as the views of others) proceeds to an exposition of the (Platonic) threefold division of the soul, and the different vices which belong to the various parts of it. This all, as he expressly points out, is included only *ἐν ἐπιτόμῳ* (in an abridged manner), so that the reader can grasp more clearly the various vices and their interrelation.

The main patristic source on which the author of our treatise draws for this moral valuation of sins is the *Epistola Canonica* written by Gregory of Nyssa to the Bishop Letoius of Melitene,¹ in which is expressed the idea that in order to cure diseases of the soul a full knowledge of its nature is necessary. Therefore, the (Platonic) threefold division of the soul into *λογιστικόν*, *ἐπιθυμητικόν*, and *θυμοειδὲς* is introduced, together with a number of the diseases particular to each part. This very same threefold division is used by the author of the treatise *De Virtutibus et Passionibus* when, after enumerating all the vices of the body and soul, he tries to help his reader to discern more clearly the different vices and their interrelation.

According to this division: (A) To the *λογιστικόν* belong the following vices: *ἀπιστία* (lack of faith), *αἵρεσις* (heresy), *ἀφροσύνη* (folly, thoughtlessness), *βλασφημία* (blasphemy), *ἀδιακρισία* (slyness, fraud), *ἀχαριστία* (ingratitude), *καὶ αἱ συγκαταθέσεις τῶν ἁμαρτημάτων, αἱ γίνονται ἐκ τοῦ παθητικοῦ μέρους* (perverse approbation of sins caused by the part of the soul capable of emotion). (B) To the *θυμικόν* belong: *ἀσπλαχνία* (lack of pity), *μῖσος* (hatred), *τὸ ἀσύμπαθες* (lack of sympathy), *τὸ μνησίκακον* (vengefulness), *φθόνος* (envy), *φόνος* (murder), *καὶ ἡ συνεχὴς περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα μελέτη* (and the constant contemplation of such things). (C) To the *ἐπιθυμητικόν* belong: *γαστριμαργία* (gluttony), *λαυμαργία* (gourmandism), *οἰνοφλυγία* (drunkenness), *πορνεία* (debauchery, prostitution), *μοιχεία* (adultery), *ἀκαθαρσία* (uncleanness), *ἀσέλγεια* (promiscuity), *φιλοχρηματία* (avarice), *ἡ τῆς κενῆς δόξης ἐπιθυμία, χρυσοῦ τε καὶ πλούτου καὶ τῶν σαρκικῶν ἡδονῶν* (the desire for vainglory of gold and wealth and bodily lust).

At the same time, he offers a cure for the vices of each part of the soul: (A) for the vices of the *λογιστικόν* he prescribes: *ἡ ἀδίστακτος πίστις ἡ πρὸς τὸν θεόν, τὰ ἀληθινὰ καὶ τὰ ἀπλανῆ καὶ ὀρθόδοξα δόγματα, ἡ συνεχὴς μελέτη τῶν λόγιων τοῦ πνεύματος, ἡ καθαρὰ προσευχή, καὶ ἡ ἀδιάλειπτος πρὸς θεὸν εὐχαριστία* (unswerving faith in God, the true and unerring orthodox dogmas, the constant study of the wisdom (maxims) of the spirit, pure prayer, and ceaseless thanksgiving to God). (B) For the

¹ *Migne Patr. Gr.* 45. 222 f. The editor however believes that this *Epistola Canonica* may not have come down to us in its original full form. For the text together with the commentary of Theodoros Balsamon see *Migne Patr. Gr.* 138. 851 f.

vices of the θυμικόν, the cure he suggests is: ἡ φιλανθρωπία, ἡ ἀγάπη, ἡ πραότης, ἡ φιλαδελφία, ἡ συμπάθεια, ἡ ἀνεξικακία καὶ ἡ χρηστότης (love of one's fellow men, love, gentleness, brotherly love, compassion, forgiveness, and goodness). (C) Finally, for the vices of the ἐπιθυμητικόν, the cure suggested is: ἡ νηστεία, ἡ ἐγκράτεια, ἡ κακοπάθεια, ἡ ἀκτημοσύνη, ὁ τῶν χρημάτων πρὸς τοὺς πέντας σκορπισμός, ἡ τῶν μελλόντων ἐκείνων ἀγαθὸν ἔφεσις, ἡ τῆς βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ ὄρεξις, ἡ τῆς υἰοθεσίας ἐπιθυμία (fasting, continence, austerity, poverty, the distribution of money to the poor, desire for the good things of the future life, longing for the kingdom of God, the will to adopt a child). In these cures, however, the author of our treatise does not seem to be following the corresponding part of his main source, the Epistola Canonica of Gregory of Nyssa, at least in the form that we have it to-day.

But the treatise *De Virtutibus et Vitiis* makes it clear (just as its source Gregory does) that the sins of the λογιστικόν are worse than those of the two lower parts of the soul, and again, those of the θυμικόν worse than the vices of the ἐπιθυμητικόν,¹ and that they differ ἐπὶ τε ταῖς ἐξ αὐτῶν ἐνεργείαις καὶ τῇ τῶν κολάσεων ἐκτίσει (both in their effects and the punishment due to each). A little further on² the treatise, referring again to the threefold division of the soul, says: *τριμερὴς τοίνυν ὁσα, ὡς προδεδήλωται, ἡ ψυχὴ, τρία γάρ, ὡς εἴρηται, μέρη ταύτης εἰσὶ, λογισμός, θυμὸς καὶ ἐπιθυμία. Ἐὰν ἐστὶ ἐν τῷ θυμῷ ἀγάπη καὶ φιλανθρωπία καὶ ἐν τῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ καθαρότης καὶ σωφροσύνη, ὁ λογισμὸς ἐστὶ πεφωτισμένος. . . ὁ μὲν ἀναλογισμὸς τότε ὑγιαίνει καὶ σωφρονεῖ καὶ φωτίζεται, ὅτε τὰ πάθη ἔχει ὑποταγμένα, καὶ τοὺς λόγους τῶν κτισμάτων τοῦ θεοῦ πνευματικῶς θεωρεῖ* (the soul being threefold, as we have said, has three parts, as has been made clear; the *logismos*, the *thymos*, and the *epithymia*. If in the *thymos* there is love and charity, and in the *epithymia* purity and virtue, the *logismos* is enlightened . . . the *logismos* then is healthy and sane and enlightened, when it has subjugated the passions and beholds in a spiritual manner the reasons for the creations of God).³

When Dante, in the first canto of the *Inferno*, ll. 100 ff., speaks of the famous and obscure 'veltro' (greyhound), which will cause the death of the wolf, the beast of avarice, in prophetically obscure lines he says:

Questi non cibera terra ne peltro,
Ma sapienza e amore e virtute,

'He for his substance will not take land or lucre, but *wisdom, love, and virtue*. . . ' These correspond exactly to the three main virtues of the three parts of the soul as our treatise expresses them.

¹ Cf. Migne *Patr. Gr.* 45. 225c, where Gregory of Nyssa says: ὅσα μὲν ἀμαρτήματα τοῦ λογιστικοῦ τῆς ψυχῆς ἀπτεται μέρους χαλεπώτερα παρὰ τῶν πατέρων ἐκρίθη, καὶ μείζονος καὶ διαρκεστέρως καὶ ἐπιποινωτέρως τῆς ἐπιστροφῆς ἀξία ὅλον εἰ τις ἠρνήσατο τὴν εἰς Χριστὸν πίστιν ἢ πρὸς Ἰουδαϊσμόν ἢ πρὸς εἰδωλολατρείαν ἢ Μανιχαϊσμόν ἢ πρὸς ἄλλο τι τοιοῦτον ἀθείας εἶδος αὐτομολήσας ἐφάνη. . . See also p. 229c, where Gregory speaks about the vices of the θυμικόν.

² p. 430c f.

³ The ultimate source of this is the ninth book of Plato's *Republic* (pp. 571c ff. and 580d ff.).

Perhaps it would not be too bold to suggest that the three figures, Virgil, Beatrice, and Lucia, who came to Dante's aid when he was straying in the Wood of Error, and by showing him all the vices and virtues and their consequences in the course of the *Divina Commedia* succeeded in saving his soul—that these three figures correspond to, and personify, the three main virtues of the three parts of the soul, wisdom, love, and virtue. That Virgil represents wisdom has been frequently reiterated and almost universally accepted; and equally that Beatrice personifies love in the highest form. The choice of St Lucia for the role of virtue is particularly appropriate, for have we not been told that the cure for the vices of the ἐπιθυμητικόν are fasting, continence, austerity, poverty, the distribution of money to the poor, desire for the good things of the future life—precisely the qualities attributed to her? For she was famous for her chastity, austerity, and poverty; she had persuaded her mother to distribute all her fortune among the poor; she had preserved her purity when she was attacked before the altar, and her mind was constantly longing for the good things of the future life.¹

And just as our treatise says that the higher part of the soul, the λογιστικόν, must dominate the lower parts,² so the personifications of the virtues of the two lower parts of the soul are willing to consign to Virgil, the personification of the virtue of the higher part, the guidance of Dante through the first and most trying part of his journey.³

It has always puzzled the readers and commentators of Dante why, in his conception of Hell as a cavity descending in concentric circles gradually narrowing to the centre of the earth, where Lucifer is seated, and where the gravity of the sin and the punishment meted out to it vary with the depth beneath the surface of the earth, the poet has

¹ Cf. *Analecta Bollandiana* XXII 492; and Cahier, *Caractéristiques des Saints* (Paris 1867) I 105.

² p. 430d: ὁ μὲν ἀναλογισμὸς τότε ὑγιαίνει καὶ σωφρονεῖ καὶ φωτίζεται, ὅτε τὰ πάθη ἔχει ὑποταγμένα. This is exactly what Dante tells us in *Inferno* v 36–39:

Intesi, che a così fatto tormento
Enno dannati i peccator carnali
Che la ragion sommettono al talento. . .

'I was aware that to a torment thus fashioned are condemned the carnal sinners who made their reason subject to their inclination', when he entered the second circle of Hell proper and saw the spirits of the incontinent.

³ The Platonic teaching that the higher part of the soul should be the masters of the lower parts (*Republic* ix pp. 271c ff. and 580d ff.) reappears in the *Philosophumena* of Maximus of Tyre, where (xxiii, viiia ff.) we are told: Ἐπειδὴν ψυχῆς θηριώδεις κρατήσουσιν ἐπιθυμίας, φυλάττουσαι τὴν ἀνθρωπίνην ἐπιφάνειαν, τῇ τῶν ἔργων ὑπηρεσίᾳ ἀπέφηναν τὸν χρόμενον ἐξ ἀνθρώπου θηρίον. Τοῦτο οἱ Κένταυροι, τοῦτο αἱ Γοργόνες, τοῦτο αἱ Χίμαιραι, ὁ Γηρυόνης, ὁ Κέκροψ. Ἀφελὲ τὴν γαστρὸς ἐπιθυμίαν, καὶ ἀφείλες τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τὸ θηρίον ἀφελὲ τὴν αἰδαῖον ἐπιθυμίαν, καὶ διέκοψας τὸ θηρίον. . . 'When the bestial desires master the soul though they retain the appearance of man, they turn him in practice from a human being into an animal. This is the case with the Centaurs, the Gorgons, the Chimæra, Geryones, and Cecrops. Take away the desires of the stomach and you have removed the animal from within man. Take away the sexual desire and you have cut away the beast.'

Dante must have had a similar source before him when he instituted his 'Infernal Police', of these very half-animals, beings in whom the higher part of the soul was dominated by the lower; the Centaurs (*Inferno* xii), Geryon (*Inf.* xvii), Medusa, one of the Gorgons (*Inf.* ix), and even the Giants (*Inf.* xxxi), if Cecrops, as a son of the Earth, was seen as such.

divided Hell proper into two parts, of which the lower is *basso inferno*, the City of Dis, being separated from the upper part by a series of massive walls containing the worst malefactors. In fact, the *Inferno* appears to be divided into three parts, which correspond to the threefold division of the soul, the first being formed of the second, third, and fourth circles of the *Inferno*, contained between the river Acheron and the Stygian marsh, in which the incontinent, the gluttonous, the avaricious, and the prodigal are consecutively punished; exactly those sins which belong to the ἐπιθυμητικὸν according to this part of our treatise. The second, consisting of the Stygian marsh itself, is included in the fifth circle, and contains the wrathful, whose sins comprise the sins of the θυμικὸν (lack of pity, hatred, lack of sympathy, revengefulness, envy, murder).¹ And the third, and most terrible realm, consists of the *basso inferno*, where the heretics and the infidels (Epicurus), the violent (*a*) to their neighbours, (*b*) to themselves, (*c*) to God and Nature, the fraudulent, and finally the traitors are punished, in the seventh, eighth, and ninth circles and their subdivisions: those sins of which the chief classes are the sins of the λογιστικὸν.² It is interesting to notice that when Virgil is leading Dante into the City of Dis, he meets with considerable difficulty (*Inferno* viii 109 ff.)—a difficulty that was overcome only when a heavenly messenger repelled the devils. In this incident one is tempted to see that pagan wisdom alone was not enough to master the λογιστικὸν; Christian wisdom also must come to its aid.

The main obstacle to this interpretation is, of course, the classification of sins as they appear in Virgil's speech in the eleventh canto (ll. 79 ff.), where a reference is made to what seems to be the opening words of Aristotle's *Ethics* vii:³

Non ti rimembra di quelle parole,
Colle quai la tua Ètica pertratta
Le tre disposizion che il ciel non vuole:
Incontinenza, malizia e la matta
Bestialitate? e come incontinenza
Men Dio offende e men biasimo accatta?

¹ Ἀσπλαγία, μῖσος, ἀσύνπαλεις, μνησάκακον, φθόνος, φόνος, καὶ ἡ συνεχὴς περὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα μελέτη.
Cf. *Inferno* viii 109 ff.:

Ed io, che di mirar mi stava inteso,
Vidi genti fangose in quel pantano,
Ignude tutte e con sembiante offeso.
Questi sì percocean, non pur con mano,
Ma con la testa, col petto e coi piedi,
Troncandosi coi denti a brano a brano.
Lo buon Maestro disse: Figlio, or vedi
L'anima di color cui vinse l'ira: . . .

² And I, who was standing intent to gaze, saw folk mired in that slough, all naked and with mien of one tripped up. These were beating each other, not only with hand, but with the head and with the breast and with the feet, maiming each other with their teeth piecemeal. The good Master said: "My son, now seest thou the souls of them whom wrath overcame" . . .

³ We must always remember that the *De Virtutibus et Passionibus* is but a 'summary' of its sources.

⁴ Μετὰ δὲ τὰυτὰ λεκτέον, ἄλλην ποιησαμένους ἀρχήν, ὅτι τῶν περὶ τὰ ἥθη φευκτῶν τρία ἔστιν εἶδη, κακία, ἀκρασία, θηριότης.

Se tu riguardi ben questa sentenza,
E rechiti alla mente, chi son quelli,
Che su di fuor sostengon penitenza,
Tu vedrai ben, perchè da questi felli
Sien dipartiti, e perchè men crucciata
La divina vendetta gli martelli.

'Dost thou not remember the terms in which thy *Ethics* treats of the three states of mind which Heaven condemns—incontinence, fraud, and unreasoning bestiality? and how incontinence offends God less and receives less blame? If thou payest good heed to this judgment, and recallest to thy mind who these spirits are that endure chastisement above in the outer Hell, thou wilt readily see wherefore they are disassociated from these wicked ones, and wherefore God's vengeance smites them with less severity.'

But just as Witte, Moore, and others thought,¹ Dante does not seem to follow this threefold division, and uses the great and well-known authority of Aristotle only to show why the sins of incontinence are outside the City of Dis.²

It appears probable, then, that Dante has fashioned the basic outline of the moral order of his *Inferno* on some similar Byzantine treatise on vice and virtue based on the Platonic threefold division of the soul, very probably one of the sources of our own *De Virtutibus et Passionibus*, which must have travelled West presumably in a Latin translation. In that case we should have yet another striking instance of Byzantine influence upon the thought and literature of the West. This may also account for the various and often incongruous Greek philosophical doctrines which so often appear in Dante, who, as is generally accepted, did not know Greek, and could not have studied them in the original. On the other hand, Byzantine writings of a less erudite nature are full of disjointed elements of Greek philosophical thought, which they found ready to hand in various anthologies.

But we must always bear in mind that the *Divina Commedia*, though in its ultimate analysis and mission can be seen as a Grand Treatise on Virtues and Vices, enlightening the reader and guiding him towards salvation, is primarily meant to be a great work of Poetry and not of Moral Philosophy with all the freedom and beauty in expression and form displayed by the great works of art.

C. A. TRYPANIS.

Oxford.

¹ Witte *Dante Forschungen* I 20; Moore *Studies in Dante* II 160 ff.; Butler *The Hell of Dante Alighieri*, p. 129, n. 80 f.

² It might well be that on this point Dante is again drawing upon a treatise similar to ours, which combined the teachings of many schools; or even that he was avoiding the express mention of the (Platonic) threefold division of the soul, because in the Middle Ages it had repeatedly been accused of giving three souls, and not one soul, to man.